

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A process of documenting the contents of at least one version of a plurality of data products stored in a database, at least one of said products being a composite product having at least a portion of said data products included therein, the process comprising the steps of:
 - creating a state file to be associated with a version of a composite product to be created, said state file specifying a selected version of at least one selected data product to be used in creating said composite product;
 - 10 using said state file to access said selected version of said selected product from the database;
 - creating said version of said composite product by including therein at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product; and
 - 15 generating a state history file associated with said version of said composite product, said state history file indicating that at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product is included within said version of said composite product.
2. A process as recited in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
 - assigning a product name to said composite product;
 - storing said version of said composite product in the database; and
 - 20 storing said state history file in the database.
3. A process as recited in claim 1 further comprising the step of assigning a version value to said version of said composite product.
4. A process as recited in claim 1 wherein each of said products has publishing information associated therewith, said publishing information indicating a currently published one of said versions of said product.
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5. A process as recited in claim 4 wherein said publishing information further indicates previously published versions of said product.

6. A process as recited in claim 4 wherein said state file identifies said selected version of said selected product by specifying the currently published version of said selected product, said process further comprising the step of:

if said state file specifies the currently published version of said selected product, determining which version of said selected product is currently published.

7. A process as recited in claim 1 wherein said state file identifies said selected version of said selected product by specifying a latest version of said selected product, said process further comprising the step of:

if said state file specifies the latest version of said selected product, determining which version of said selected product is the latest version.

8. A process as recited in claim 4 further comprising the step of prohibiting users from modifying said currently published version.

9. A process as recited in claim 2 wherein said state file may be modified by a user.

10. A process as recited in claim 2 further comprising the step of prohibiting users from modifying said state history file.

11. A process as recited in claim 1 wherein said state history file is a first state history file, wherein said selected data product is a composite data product having at least a portion of a version of a data product included therein, and wherein said selected product has a second state history file associated therewith, said second state history file indicating said version of said data product included within said selected data product, said first and second state history files providing an indication of the contents of said version of said composite product.

12. A process as recited in claim 1 wherein a first one of said products comprises a first representation of a particular version of a particular one of said products, and a second one of said products comprises a second representation of said particular version of said particular product.

13. A process as recited in claim 12 wherein said state history file associated with said version of said composite product further indicates a type of representation embodying said selected version of said selected product that is included within said associated composite product.

14. A process of documenting the contents of at least one version of a plurality of data products stored in a database, at least one of said data products being a composite data product having at least a portion of said data products included therein, the process comprising the steps of:

5 providing a user interface enabling a user to indicate a selected version of at least one selected data product to be used by a user in creating a composite product;

receiving user input indicating a selected version of at least one selected data product;

10 creating a state file based on said selected version of said selected data product, said state file for specifying said selected version of said selected data product;

using said state file to access said selected version of said selected product from the database;

15 providing a user interface enabling a user to indicate that said version of said composite product has been created by including therein at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product;

receiving user input indicating that said version of said composite product has been created; and

20 generating a state history file associated with said version of said composite product, said state history file indicating that at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product is included within said version of said composite product.

15. A process as recited in claim 14 further comprising the steps of:
providing a user interface enabling the user to specify a product name associated with
said composite product;

storing said version of said composite product in the database; and
storing said state history file in the database.

16. A process as recited in claim 14 further comprising the step of assigning a
version value to said version of said composite product.

17. A process as recited in claim 14 wherein each of said products has publishing
information associated therewith, said publishing information indicating a currently
published one of said versions of said product.
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18. A process as recited in claim 17 wherein said step of providing a user interface
enabling a user to indicate a selected version of at least one selected data product
includes enabling said user to identify said selected version of said selected product by
specifying the currently published version of said selected product, said process
5 further comprising the step of:

if said state file specifies the currently published version of said selected
product, determining which version of said selected product is currently published.

19. A process as recited in claim 14 wherein said step of providing a user interface
enabling a user to indicate a selected version of at least one selected data product
includes enabling said user to identify said selected version of said selected product by
specifying a latest version of said selected product, said process further comprising the
5 step of:

if said state file specifies the latest version of said selected product,
determining which version of said selected product is the latest version.

20. A system for documenting the contents of at least one version of a plurality of data products stored in a database, at least one of said products being a composite product having at least a portion of at least one of said data products included therein, said system comprising:

5 means for creating a state file to be associated with a version of a composite product to be created, said state file specifying a selected version of at least one selected data product to be used in creating said composite product;

 means for using said state file to access said selected version of said selected product from the database;

10 means for creating said version of said composite product by including therein at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product; and

 means for generating a state history file associated with said version of said composite product, said state history file indicating that at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product is included within said version of said composite product.

21. A machine readable storage device having stored therein encoding instructions for executing a process of documenting the contents of at least one version of a plurality of data products stored in a database, at least one of said data products being 5 a composite data product having at least a portion of at least one of said data products included therein, comprising the steps of:

 creating a state file to be associated with a version of a composite product to be created, said state file specifying a selected version of at least one selected data product to be used in creating said composite product;

10 using said state file to access said selected version of said selected product from the database;

 creating said version of said composite product by including therein at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product; and

15 generating a state history file associated with said version of said composite product, said state history file indicating that at least a portion of said selected version of said selected product is included within said version of said composite product.

22. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 further comprising the steps of:

assigning a product name to said composite product;
storing said version of said composite product in the database; and
5 storing said state history file in the database.

23. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 further comprising the step of assigning a version value to said version of said composite product.

24. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein each of said products has publishing information associated therewith, said publishing information indicating a currently published one of said versions of said product.

25. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein said publishing information further indicates previously published versions of said product.

26. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 25 wherein said state file identifies said selected version of said selected product by specifying the currently published version of said selected product, said process further comprising the step of:

if said state file specifies the currently published version of said selected product, determining which version of said selected product is currently published.

27. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein said state file identifies said selected version of said selected product by specifying a latest version of said selected product, said process further comprising the step of:

if said state file specifies the latest version of said selected product, 5 determining which version of said selected product is the latest version.

28. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 further comprising the step of prohibiting users from modifying said currently published version.

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29. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein said state file may be modified by a user.
30. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 22 further comprising the step of prohibiting users from modifying said state history file.
31. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein said state history file is a first state history file, wherein said selected data product is a composite data product having at least a portion of a version of a data product included therein, and wherein said selected product has a second state history file associated therewith, said second state history file indicating said version of said data product included within said selected data product, said first and second state history files providing an indication of the contents of said version of said composite product.
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32. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 21 wherein a first one of said products comprises a first representation of a particular version of a particular one of said products, and a second one of said products comprises a second representation of said particular version of said particular product.
33. A machine readable storage device as recited in claim 32 wherein said state history file associated with said version of said composite product further indicates a type of representation embodying said selected version of said selected product included within said associated composite product.